GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
WATER RESOURCES
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1698
ANSWERED ON:03.03.2003
CONTAMINATED GROUND WATER
VINAY KUMAR SORAKE

Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether according to a recent research, more than 449 million residents along the Gangetic basin are exposed to arsenic poisoning through contaminated ground water;

(b) if so, whether the wells surveyed in the region contain five times more arsenic than the permissible levels;

(c) if so, whether a deeper region-wise study on ground water quality has been suggested; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the action taken thereon?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SMT. BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY)

(a) to (c) As per studies conducted by the Central GroundWater Board (CGWB),under the Ministry of Water Resources, arsenic contamination in ground water in the lower Gangetic Plain of West Bengal has been identified sporadically in a linear tract extending from southern part of Malda district (North of GangaRiver) through Murshidabad, Nadia, North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas districts to the East of Bhagirathi and Bardhaman, Howrah and Hoogly districts to the West of Bhagirathi. At present 67 blocks of eight districts of West Bengal have been identified to have arsenic contamination in ground water more than the permissible limit of 0.05 mg/l.

(d) Action taken to contain the problem of arsenic contamination in the State of West Bengal include the following:-

1. The State Government of West Bengal, in collaborationwith and financial support from the Government of India, have sanctioned scheme for supply of surface water based water supply for Malda district, South 24 Parganas district and has prepared a perspective plan to tackle arsenic contamination.

2. The All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health under, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, has undertaken epidemiological study in arsenic affected areas.

3. Several Research & Development projects, as given below, have been sanctioned under the Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission of the Ministry of Rural Development:-

(i) Sub-Mission Project on arsenic pollution in ground water in West Bengal.

(ii) Study of arsenic contamination in six districts of West Bengal.

(iii) R&D project on epidemiological study for assessing toxicity in chronic arsenic affected areas.

(iv) R&D projects on control of arsenic and other chemical pollutants.

(v) Development of low cost filtering medium for removal of arsenic from ground water.

(vi) Study of geology and geo-chemistry of arsenic occurrences in ground water of six districts in West Bengal.